

Allowing Kickapoos to hunt certain deer for religious rites on any day

HB 2159 by Garza (Madla)

DIGEST: HB 2159 would have allowed a documented member of the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas who held a hunting license to hunt antlerless white-tailed deer for religious ceremonial purposes on any day of the year between one-half hour before sunrise and one-half hour after sunset.

GOVERNOR'S REASON FOR VETO: "House Bill No. 2159 would require the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to issue a year-round license to only a member of the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas for hunting antlerless white-tailed deer. This would circumvent TPWD authority to regulate hunting and wildlife management in the State of Texas."

RESPONSE: Rep. Timoteo Garza, the bill's author, said: "Governor: The concern your staff had and the reason given for the vetoing of HB 2159 was also a concern of mine. It is for this same reason that I asked the Department of Parks and Wildlife to draft language that they could administer, thus the language of the bill.

"Governor, America represents liberty. When the settlers from Europe first came to this great country of ours, many were fleeing from religious persecution. What they found were native Indians that were free, they could practice their religion as the Lord taught them without fear of reprisals. The hunting of deer by the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas is strictly religious; but for the deer, the Kickapoo cannot pray. Unintentionally, we as Americans have denied them what our forefathers sought in establishing the United States of America. By them not being able to hunt year-round, their prayer in the U.S. is limited to deer hunting season. Governor, I know that you will not be against this invaluable principle. May God bless you."

Sen. Frank Madla, the Senate sponsor, had no comment on the veto.

NOTES: HB 2159 was analyzed in Part Three of the May 2 *Daily Floor Report*.